REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and following remarks, Applicant requests favorable reconsideration of the above-identified application.

Claims 1-97 are now pending in this application, with Claims 1, 8, 15, 16, 22, 28, 35, 42, 52, 59, 66, 74, and 82 being independent. By this Amendment, Applicant has amended Claims 1, 7, 8, 15, 16-18, 20, 22-24, 26, 28-30, 32, 33, 35-37, 39, 42-44, 46, 48-56, 59-63, 66-70, 74-78, 82-86, and 89-92. No new matter has been added.

Claims 1-97 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement, because the phrase "allotted outputting mode" is allegedly not used in the specification. Applicant has amended the claims herein to replace "allotted outputting mode" with "cascade outputting mode." Favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of this Section 112 rejection are requested.

Claims 16-97 also stand rejected under Section 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement, because the phrase "controller inhibits an execution of the allotted printing operation" is allegedly not used in the specification. Applicant has amended the term "allotted printing operation" to read "cascade outputting mode" herein. In addition, Applicant submits that support for this claim feature may be found at least at page 6, line 16, through page 7, line 2, and page 28, line 22, through page 29, line 25. Favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of this Section 112 rejection are requested.

Claims 1-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,348,971 (Owa et al.). Claims 16-97 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Owa et al. in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2001/0052995 (Idehara). Applicant traverses these rejections.

In aspects of Applicant's invention, each of independent Claims 1, 8, and 15 generally recites that an image output control apparatus is controlled to select a cascade outputting mode in which output processing of input data is allotted to plural image output devices. The system obtains output medium information stored in each image output device that should be used in the cascade outputting mode. On the basis of the obtained output medium information, it is judged whether or not each of the selected plural image output devices stores the same size output medium.

In other aspects of Applicant's invention, each of independent Claims 16, 22, 28, 35, and 42 generally recites that an image output system includes plural image output devices, each of which has an acceptor that accepts an instruction for causing a local device and an other image output device to start a cascade printing operation that print processing of a series of data is able to allot to the local device and the other image output device. A controller executes or inhibits the cascade printing operation.

In still other aspects of Applicant's invention, each of independent Claims 52, 59, 66, 74, and 82 generally recites a method of operating an image output system including plural image output devices. The method includes inputting an instruction for causing plural image output devices to start a cascade printing operation that print processing of a

series of data is able to allot with the plural image output devices. In addition, execution of the cascade printing operation is permitted or inhibited.

Thus, each of independent Claims 1, 8, and 15 features selecting a cascade outputting mode, each of independent Claims 16, 22, 28, 35, and 42 features accepting an instruction for causing a local device and an other image output device to start a cascade printing operation, and each of independent Claims 52, 59, 66, 74, and 82 features inputting instructions for causing plural image output devices to start a cascade printing operation. Applicant submits that these features are not taught or suggested by the cited patent documents, whether those documents are taken alone or in combination.

Owa et al. relates to a printing system for selecting an optimum printer for printing. Specifically, that patent describes a system that includes a PC and a plurality of printers connected thereto. The system is arranged so as to select an optimum one of the plurality of printers to print data from the PC. This selection process is discussed in Owa et al. at, for example, column 7, lines 4-11.

However, Owa et al. fails to disclose a cascade outputting mode in which data output processing of input data is allotted to plural image output devices. More specifically, Applicant submits that Owa et al. fails to disclose or suggest at least the features of selecting a cascade outputting mode, as generally recited in independent Claims 1, 8, and 15. Moreover, Owa et al. fails to disclose or suggest accepting an instruction for causing a local device and an other image output device to start a cascade printing operation, as recited in independent Claims 16, 22, 28, 35, and 42, and inputting instruction for causing plural image output devices to start a cascade printing operation, as recited in independent Claims 52, 59, 66, 74, and 82.

Idehara relates to an input-output apparatus selecting method for a network system. According to Applicant's understanding, that patent teaches that, when printing cannot by performed by a certain printer, the printing is performed by a substitute printer. However, Idehara is not understood to remedy the deficiencies of Owa et al. Specifically, Idehara also fails to disclose 1) selecting a cascade outputting mode, as recited in independent Claims 1, 8, and 15, 2) accepting an instruction for causing a local device and an other image output device to start a cascade printing operation, as recited in independent Claims 16, 22, 28, 35, and 42, and 3) inputting instruction for causing plural image output devices to start a cascade printing operation, as recited in independent Claims 52, 59, 66, 74, and 82.

The remaining claims in the present application are dependent claims which depend from the above-discussed independent claims, and thus are patentable over the applied document for reasons noted above with respect to those independent claims. In addition, each recites features of the invention still further distinguishing it from the applied document. Applicant requests favorable and independent consideration thereof.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant requests withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103 and allowance of this case.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

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